



# UNDERSTANDING NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE

COMMUNITY FORUM ON  
NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS

MARCH 2019

PREPARED BY  
LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION

## INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is an issue that touches our Los Angeles Native American community, but not much is formally known about the particular issues our relatives face, nor do we know their true count and other characteristics. On September 25, 2018 the Community Forum on Native American Homelessness was held at The California Endowment. This is a progress report detailing what we learned, and recommendations for next steps in the long journey ahead. We invite you to learn, share, and get involved!

**The Issue:** Although Los Angeles County (LAC) is home to the largest population of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) in the United States (roughly 157,517 according to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate)<sup>1</sup>, we believe that homeless Native Americans are both severely undercounted and unconnected to appropriate resources. This report is an attempt to identify the gaps in knowledge and practice, uplift the unique experiences of our population, and highlight the innovative proposals identified by our passionate community members.

**Undercounted:** The 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count reported 565 homeless AIAN in LAC,<sup>2</sup> which is 1% of the LAC homeless population, or 0.3% of the total AIAN population in LAC. We believe this is incorrect. We know that poverty, chronic disease, mental health diagnoses, and substance abuse are predictors of homelessness. Unfortunately, these risk factors are disproportionately high in our community. For instance, AIAN in LAC are 3.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites (NHW) to live in households with an income below the federal poverty level.<sup>3</sup> The diabetes mortality rate for AIAN is more than twice that of all races in LAC, and suicidal ideation among AIAN is more than 3 times higher than all races in LAC.<sup>4</sup> Alcohol and pain reliever abuse or dependence is also twice as high nationally compared to NHW.<sup>5</sup> We believe there is a disconnect between these risk factors and the actual number of AIAN who are experiencing homelessness.

Based on results from the Healthy LA Natives study, 14% of AIAN survey respondents were homeless, and 20% of AIAN survey respondents were temporarily homeless.<sup>6</sup> While there are also limitations in the definitions and sampling methodology for the Healthy LA Natives study, this is quite different than the 0.3%--1% range captured by the 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Equally important, we know the current definition of AIAN in the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count is inconsistent with the definition widely accepted and endorsed by entities such as the Urban Indian Health Institute, and significantly reduces the number of AIAN.

**Unconnected:** Not only is Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) concerned about the number of homeless individuals, but direct service providers of Native Americans in Los Angeles are also concerned about the special considerations for this population. Patricia Lopez (Tewa Pueblo), Supervisor Hahn appointed Commissioner and Nurse Practitioner at United American Indian Involvement (UAI) reflected, "As a Native American clinician treating many homeless at UAI, I see people that view us as their cultural, spiritual, medical and community home. Living on the streets, in their cars, couch surfing, they can't practice their healing ways. Isolation, fear of the urban environment, and racial discrimination take their toll on them... Frequently my patients are victims of theft of their medications and belongings, including sacred objects used in prayer... There are basic, cultural issues that the agencies who help the homeless are not knowledgeable of when dealing with Native people. This is what is at the heart of the problem of homelessness for our community." Not only is there a dearth of culturally sensitive homeless service agencies, among the AIAN serving agencies, their services in homelessness, and connection to the Continuum of Care are largely unknown by the greater community.

**"I SEE PEOPLE THAT VIEW US [UAI] AS THEIR CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL, MEDICAL AND COMMUNITY HOME...THERE ARE BASIC, CULTURAL ISSUES THAT THE AGENCIES WHO HELP THE HOMELESS ARE NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE OF WHEN DEALING WITH NATIVE PEOPLE. THIS IS WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS FOR OUR COMMUNITY."**

**- Patricia Lopez (Tewa Pueblo), Nurse Practitioner, Supervisor Hahn Appointed Commissioner**



**1 out of 5 people** were temporarily homeless (staying temporarily with friends/relatives)



**1 out of every 7 people** were homeless (living in a hotel, shelter, or vehicle)

Healthy LA Natives, 2018

## CONTEXT

**"PRIOR TO 1492, NATIVE COMMUNITIES HAD A 100% SUCCESS RATE IN HOUSING AND DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS IN CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE."**

**-COLLEEN ECHOHAWK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHIEF SEATTLE CLUB**

There is an indelible connection between settler colonialism, subsequent policies of removal, termination, assimilation, relocation, and modern Indigenous homelessness. While the dominant narrative focuses on individual deficits as reasons for homelessness (e.g. alcoholism, mental illness, 'a cultural preference' for being homeless), we challenge these notions by outlining the ways in which modern Indigenous homelessness is a direct extension of colonialism and structural racism.

While Indigenous communities are quite diverse, there are a couple commonalities. One, along with our colonized histories, we share similar impacts of disproportionate disease burden, trauma, loss of culture, socio-economic, and socio-political inequities. Yet, we also share profound strength in how we view our place in the world through our relational worldview. That is, not only do we share relationships through our complex kinship systems, but we view ourselves as in relationship with the Land. Many of our medicinal and spiritual practices are deeply rooted in our homelands, as are generations of our families' histories.

The arrival of colonizers in the United States meant that Native Americans not only suffered from catastrophic population losses due to genocide and disease, but were also forcibly relocated from our traditional homelands. Forced removal was codified and gained momentum under President Andrew Jackson, with the order of the Army to forcibly remove the Cherokee tribe as one example. Meanwhile, the Allotment era effectively downsized the possibility of AIAN land ownership by taking millions of acres out of Native American hands, and selling it to non-Native owners. This act resulted in only about half of reservation lands being held by Native Americans, and set the stage for economic hardship.

Assimilation era policies meant to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" marked the beginning of the boarding school era whereby children forcibly removed from their homes were physically, sexually, culturally, and spiritually abused and neglected. This resulted in a tremendous loss of traditional family structures, language, culture, and spirituality, and began the cycle of intergenerational trauma where these learned behaviors would be transmitted through generations.

The Termination era of policymaking would deem more than 100 tribes 'civilized' and nullify their recognition by the government. This effectively opened up tribal lands to economic exploitation. For instance, despite Los Angeles County being on traditional Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash territories, policies such as termination would make it so that there are no reservation lands designated for these tribes, and they are not afforded the same tribal sovereignty rights as other Federally recognized tribal nations.

Lastly, the Relocation Era intended to encourage Native Americans to leave reservations, acquire vocational skills, and assimilate into the general population away from their homelands. While this policy is largely responsible for the more than 71% of AIAN who live in urban areas in the present day, it did not necessarily live up to its economic promises. Indeed, 1 in 5 AIAN families, and more than 1 in 3 AIAN children lived below the federal poverty level between 2010-2014 in Los Angeles. Given this legacy of policies that resulted in dehumanization and dispossession of land and resources, it is no surprise that AIAN people lack the economic power to keep them out of homelessness, and oftentimes feel homeless in the spiritual and cultural sense.





# THE INAUGURAL COMMUNITY FORUM ON NATIVE AMERICAN HOMELESSNESS IN LOS ANGELES

Approximately 100 individuals attended the forum on September 25, 2018. Participants ranged from community members, community members with lived experience, AIAN service providers, a range of non-profits, faith based organizations, county representatives, and academic institutions. Nearly 75% of participants that signed in indicated that would like to be contacted for future activities.



## HOW WAS IT ORGANIZED?

First Half	Second Half
Getting Everyone on the Same Page (Oral Presentations)	Listening to Our Community (Break-Out Sessions)
A Personal Journey In and Out of Homelessness Robin Thundershield, Standing Rock Sioux, California Native Vote Project	How do we properly count Native Americans?
American Indians/Alaska Natives and Homelessness in Los Angeles County Farrah Ferris, Hupa/Yurok/Karuk/Redwood Creek, MSW, United American Indian Involvement	Tell us your stories. What are your experiences as a Native person who is homeless [or is providing services to homeless clients]?
LA County's Homeless Initiative and Measure H Molly Rysman, Housing and Homeless Deputy for 3rd District	How are we currently serving homeless Native Americans?
Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count: 2018 Results Lorin Kinney, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority	Brief report back from 3 groups, and wrap-up

\*Please note you can find the above presentations at [www.lanaic.org/community-forum/](http://www.lanaic.org/community-forum/)

## METHODS

This process was embarked upon synthesizing lessons from Indigenist research methods and drawing on cultural values used by Indigenous leaders such as LaDonna Harris. Briefly, those values include relationships, relational accountability, reciprocity, and redistribution.

### Relationships

As outlined above, Indigenous people believe that we are all related in the most profound sense. Not only are we related as humans, but we are related to all things, including the Land. From a practical point of view, in being true relatives to one another, we thought it was important to normalize positions of dominance (e.g. share power). We found it especially important to understand that there is no one 'expert' in homelessness. Hence, our four speakers represented different points of view and expertise in addressing homelessness: from an Indigenous person with lived experience, to an Indigenous service provider, to two county representatives who shared about county initiatives in homelessness. Further, we found it extremely important to honor the community's expertise, and therefore captured their feedback in breakout sessions.

### Relational accountability

As relatives we have a responsibility to care for one another. We do this by lifting up the voices of relatives who may not normally be heard, and we do this by showing up for one another. This report, and the video highlight reel, is part of that relational accountability. We want to be accountable to the community in sharing what we learned, by representing the community in the best way possible, and in working together to plan next steps.

### Reciprocity

If we look at reciprocity as the practice of sharing or exchanging for mutual benefit, we find that this practice runs deep in our communities. For instance, if we use medicines from the land, we give back with a prayer and an offering; if we or our families are somehow

honored by the community, we often have a practice of giving back by way of gifts, food, etc. For this project, we found it important to give back in a couple tangible ways. We wanted to ensure that we thanked attendees for their voices and time with food, with raffle items, and with customized tote bags that contained information and resources.

### Redistribution

"Our reciprocal relationships and responsibilities guides us to share our resources and help us to maintain balance" (Americans for Indian Opportunity, [www.aio.org](http://www.aio.org)). For this project we found it important to share our resources and include the community in a few ways. We hired Native American college and graduate students to take notes during the forum, and participate in subsequent research activities as desired. We procured raffle items, graphic design services, and video production services from Native American owned businesses.

We also recognize that this effort is aimed at redistribution of resources at the highest levels. We aim to call attention to the needs of our community with the understanding that we wish to have more dedicated resources for counting our community, housing our community, and having culturally centered processes and people serving our community. We wish to call attention to resources at the community, county, federal, and levels beyond to more equitably serve our homeless relatives.

Follow-up steps have included one-on-one interviews with AIAN experiencing homelessness, and a focus group that brought together our AIAN serving agencies. Transcription and analyses are underway, and will help inform future activities.

The UCLA Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this project as expedited.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CENTER ON INDIGENIST RESEARCH METHODS AND INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING?**

**THERE IS POWER IN OUR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND IN OUR LIVED EXPERIENCES. WHEN WE GET TO BE THE GENERATORS OF KNOWLEDGE, WE GET TO IDENTIFY OUR PRIORITIES AND DRAW ON OUR COLLECTIVE GENIUS.**

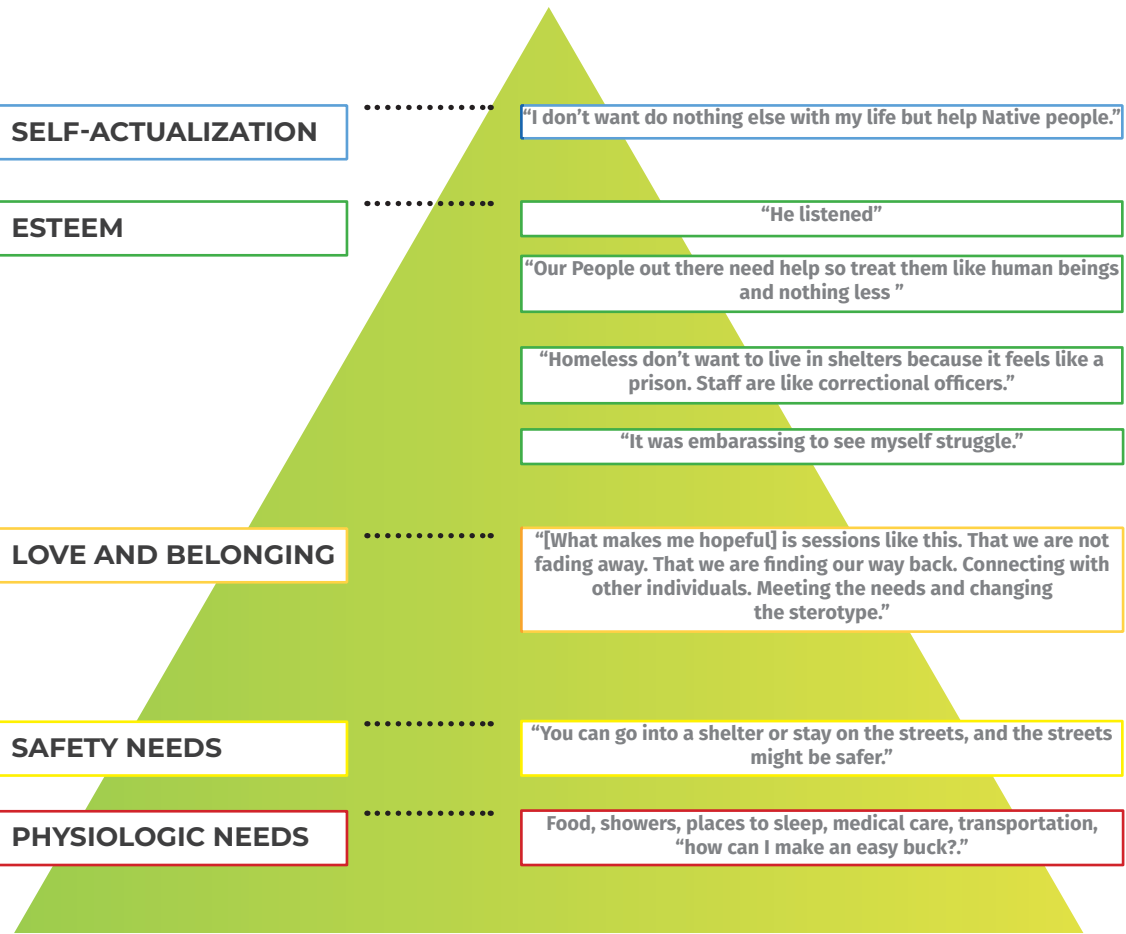
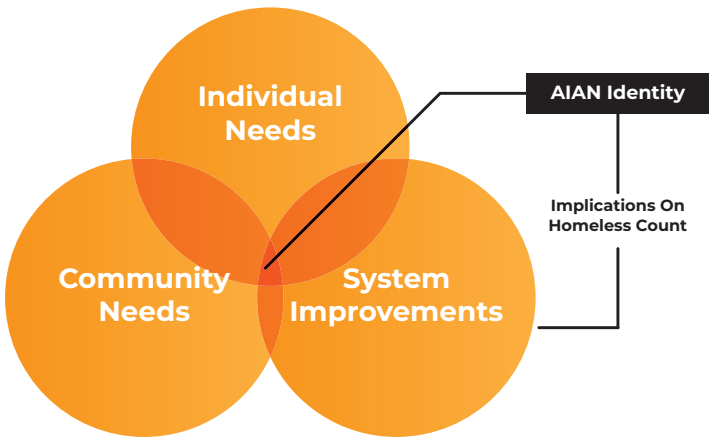


# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Community feedback was sorted into three major themes: individual needs, community needs, and systems based suggestions. Native American identity was the common tie between each category. In turn, Native American identity directly impacted the discussion about the homeless count. We'll take a deeper dive into major themes below.

## INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Individual needs were grouped into categories that mirrored Maslow's Hierarchy, of Needs. What is that? According to Maslow's Hierarchy, healthy individuals have certain needs, and these needs are arranged in a hierarchy. More basic needs (such as food, shelter, etc.) are at the bottom of the pyramid.



Fulfilling the more basic needs of the lower levels then allows individuals to focus on the higher levels of the pyramid. For our relatives experiencing homelessness, it was no surprise that physiological needs (such as food and shelter) were mentioned frequently, followed by safety needs, in which one participant noted that, "You can go into a shelter or stay on the streets, and the streets might be safer." Though contrary to Maslow's hierarchy, our participants seemed to focus more on love and belonging, and esteem needs. Love and belonging was expressed by belonging to the AIAN community as an individual, and the seeming need for the community to belong to the rest of humanity via raising visibility and changing the narrative. "[What makes me hopeful] is sessions like this. That we are not fading away. That we are finding our way back. Connecting with other individuals. Meeting the needs and changing the stereotype."

Esteem needs were mentioned most frequently. In this case, we defined esteem as encompassing respect, self-esteem, recognition, strength, and freedom. A powerful example of esteem needs was expressed in the following, "Our people out there need our help so treat them like human beings and nothing less." Lastly, self-actualization was defined as a desire to become the most that one can be. One participant expressed feeling most fulfilled when he helped his people, "I don't want to do nothing else with my life but help my native people."

## COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community needs were centered around the importance of community relationships and collaboration, and the need for physical spaces that are uniquely "native." This was no surprise given our discussion about the importance of relationships in Indigenous worldview. Under community relationships, having a shared history of trauma was mentioned as important to acknowledge. The ability to do targeted outreach to community members was also important. One person commented, "The first step is connecting them to a native community..." Another participant remarked, "How do we bring our culture and people promoting our culture together? Are there groups that can bring them together with people who are falling

through the cracks?" Under collaboration, someone noted, "Most of the organizations are overwhelmed. Collaboration is key;" while another participant suggested, "The County in collaboration with American Indian groups could have a native coalition addressing homelessness." In summary, there was a need to collaborate both within the AIAN community, and with partners outside the AIAN community.

There was particularly much conversation surrounding the idea of having physical spaces that are uniquely "native." These physical spaces ranged from smaller spaces such as community houses in actual neighborhoods, deemed 'micro community organizations,' to as large as a "native community enclave to call their own—a geographic area they can identify with." Other ideas included a "Native based shelter," a "Native based housing organization," to "tak[ing] a whole military housing complex and convert[ing] to a Native community." The ability to create these spaces by leveraging policy was also mentioned. Some participants commented that existing organizations might leverage Measure H funds, while another participant commented that there should be legislation drafted to help keep people in their neighborhoods.

## SYSTEMS BASED NEEDS

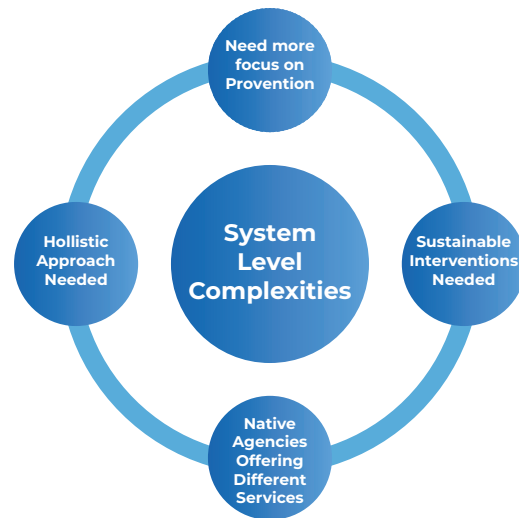
There were four subthemes under systems based needs: The need to focus more on prevention, more sustainable interventions, a holistic approach, and the need to get Native agencies on the same page. Prevention services might include services such as eviction prevention, emergency services such as rental assistance and other financial assistance, credit repair, case management, and legal services. Under prevention services, a participant mentioned, "You have to be homeless, not couch surfing in order to qualify for a voucher. There's no middle ground, and the prevention services are not enough." Under sustainable interventions, a participant said, "All we are doing is swapping resources unless we are using/giving tools for sustainability...we need long term tools." Under a holistic approach, the ability to house the diverse and multiple identities of the AIAN community was mentioned. Specifically, the following AIAN subpopulations were

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**"[WHAT MAKES ME HOPEFUL] IS SESSIONS LIKE THIS. THAT WE ARE NOT FADING AWAY. THAT WE ARE FINDING OUR WAY BACK. CONNECTING WITH OTHER INDIVIDUALS. MEETING THE NEEDS AND CHANGING THE STEREOTYPE."**

-Community forum participant





called out: Individuals vs. families; veterans; those with mental illness; transitional age youth; Two-Spirit/Trans-/LGBTQ; and women, especially women with children. One person mentioned, “Another barrier is if families have children of the opposite sex—if a mom has a son it’s more difficult to find shelter.” Participants also mentioned needing to be from a federally recognized tribe to access housing that is specific to AIAN. Another participant noted that a holistic approach would include both permanent supportive housing and interim housing, and culturally specific services.

Lastly, there was much discussion about our local Native agencies providing different services, and the desire to better coordinate with one another. A subsequent focus group was held with our Native serving agencies on December 18, 2018, to better understand their respective services related to AIAN homelessness. A detailed infographic will soon be released to outline existing services, and information learned will also inform future work group efforts. For now, a very high level overview is outlined here. From the ‘emergency services’ perspective, the LANAIC has administered the Community Services American Indian Block Grant (CSAIBG) program since 1993. The CSAIBG serves over 10,000 AIAN in Los Angeles County per year in direct services as well as intake and referral. The Self Governance Board administers sub-contracts with three American Indian groups, United American Indian Involvement (UAI),

Gabrieleno/Tongva Native American Services, and Pukuu Cultural Community Services. The types of services included intake and referral, emergency food, emergency shelter housing, employment assistance, education, youth services, and many other areas of services. Other Native serving organizations who do not receive CSAIBG funds, still offer some degree of preventive or emergency services including but not limited to the American Indian Counseling Center (AICC), Torres Martinez Tribal TANF (TMTANF), Southern California Indian Center (SCIC), and the Red Circle Project (RCP).

Insofar as housing, AICC is a County-run mental health facility and can thus access the Coordinated Entry System, which is a countywide system that brings together new and existing programs and resources in order to connect people experiencing homeless to the most appropriate housing and services. Whereas, UAI, RCP, and TMTANF currently connect homeless clients to housing resources by making referrals to outside agencies who can access the Coordinated Entry System. This is by no means an exhaustive list of current services, but a preview of further resources to come. In the interim, we suggest accessing the Red Pages for other services related to AIAN in Los Angeles, as well as the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA) “Get Help” webpage (both links found on our website under “Resources.”

## THE INTERSECTION OF IDENTITY, CULTURAL VALUES, AND THE GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNT

First, it’s important to understand a couple things about the Greater Los Angeles Homelessness Count. The Homeless Count consists of a few components: The street count (unsheltered), the shelter count, the youth count, and demographic surveys. People who are considered ‘homeless’ can be either ‘unsheltered’ or ‘sheltered.’ Unsheltered is defined as “An individual/family whose primary nighttime residence is public/private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.” For instance, this can refer to those sleeping in vehicles, tents, or elsewhere

on the streets. Sheltered (and homeless) is defined as “An individual/family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangement.” Shelters can include emergency shelters, transitional housing, safe havens, and emergency hotels/motels provided with a voucher. Probably most important to know is that the demographic survey is where things like race and ethnicity are collected—but not necessarily at the same time as the street or shelter count.

It’s also important to know that in conversations with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), their definition of “American Indian and Alaska Native” is those who only report being American Indian and Alaska Native. Thus, if a person reports AIAN and White, for instance, that person is not classified as AIAN. If a person reports AIAN and Hispanic, that person is not classified as AIAN. This is important because of the 5.2 million people who identified as AIAN in the 2010 Census, 34%, or 1.8 million, reported multiple races, and 23%, or 1.2 million, reported Hispanic ethnicity. Particularly in a diverse and urban area such as Los Angeles where AIAN families relocated in the early 1950s, interracial families are common. Indeed, when LAHSA added Hispanic to ‘AIAN alone’ this doubled the amount of AIAN who were homeless. Unfortunately, they were unable to pull ‘AIAN in combination with other races’—data which we will continue to request in future counts.

Aside from the more inclusive definition of AIAN mentioned above, participants viewed homeless AIAN identity as an overlap of multiple other identities: Individuals vs. families; veterans; those with mental illness; transitional age youth; Two-Spirit/LGBTQ; and women, especially women with children.

Our community also challenged the very definition of ‘homeless.’ Some commented that there is a general stigma associated with being homeless, and that being homeless might be seen as bringing shame on one’s family. Some questioned, “When did homeless become a label? Before it was ‘transient.’” Others simply never saw themselves as homeless, “I never identified as homeless because I was living in a car.” Others mentioned frustration with the fact that ‘couch surfing’ wasn’t considered homeless, and noted that this was both a liability that exacerbates poor economic conditions, as well as a strength showing our community’s ability to take care of one another. In specific regard to the count, an element of mistrust was noted, “some people do not want to be found,” while others asserted that it was a matter of education, “we don’t explain to our communities why we do the homeless count.”

Lastly, the actual process of the homeless count was challenged with the following suggestions/assertions:

- ‘We know where to find our community’
- ‘Have indigenous people collecting the data’
- ‘We know there are enclaves. They aren’t hidden.’
- ‘One day isn’t enough. Change the season in which the count is done’—referring to the fact that our community often travels between Los Angeles and ‘home’ (e.g. reservations or areas near their reservations).

There seemed to be a basic consensus that without addressing issues of identity, the miscategorization of AIAN in the homeless count, the stigma associated with being categorized as homeless, and without incorporating community input and guidance in the actual process, there would continue to be an undercount of AIAN. It was also understood that misrepresentation translates into fewer resources and less **power** for this community.

**WITHOUT CORRECTING THE DEFINITION OF AIAN, ACKNOWLEDGING THE STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH BEING HOMELESS, AND WITHOUT INCORPORATING COMMUNITY INPUT, HOMELESS AIAN WILL CONTINUE TO BE UNDERCOUNTED AND VASTLY UNDERSERVED.**



EVALUATIONS

WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE EVENT?

Presenters were very informative. Wealth of experience & knowledge	Amazing input from community members & homeless individuals	Diverse speakers from organization deeply involved in what efforts are being explored
Community networking	The amount of space that was created for community voice & visibility	Was conducted in a respected, gentle, yet highly informed and committed manner. I'm a big fan of brainstorming
Community groups break out what services where available	It was good to network with other non-profit organizations, etc.	Discussion of history of homelessness
Discussion of issues-homeless	Great speakers, data & outcomes	The honesty
Everyone coming together. I liked the refreshments	Help & Hope	Bringing agencies together
Great topic & great discussions during breakout sessions	The issue to resolve homelessness in the native american community. Community organized.	Great collection of advocates and community experts. I made wonderful connections here and learned a lot!
Great environment, food, speakers	Relevant info - good food - made new contacts	People / topic
Workshop interaction	The information given and the space provided to share experiences	Hosting a forum to begin the much needed discussion of native homelessness.
Very good community event and space for sharing. Thanks for the event	Very informative, great information	Provided a great start. Future suggestion would be hold during day when homeless community members can attend

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED FOR FUTURE EVENTS?

Earlier in the day...personalize technical aspects of presentation	More people commit to communication and follow up by challenging each in their own way to perform on ask or follow-up	Continue the conversations and create sub-committees
Longer event, larger event	Longer time for discussion on ideas	Hold an event at a time where homeless community members would be more available
Continued discussion to explore issues	Creating a native community-driven task force on homelessness	More frequent reminders leading up to the event
I wish it would not run so late	I think a conversation about power creations and implementation is necessary.	Each event I have attended was well organized & accessible
To walk away with one major action plan that all in attendance can work on.	Better evaluation	Inclusion of indigenous communities from South and Central America
More national education workshops as a collective effort data	More time	None - it was great!
Invite natives who live the life	Day long conference	Consider working across county lines

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

1. Work closely with LAHSA to

- a. Foremost, develop and use the correct definition of American Indians and Alaska Natives in subsequent reports
- b. Generate an accurate and detailed count of homeless Native Americans
  - i. By inclusion of AIAN service organizations in the count
  - ii. By inclusion of AIAN stakeholder input
- c. Consider adding an AIAN specific question(s) to the VISPDAT (see glossary)
- d. Consider developing positions for “housing navigators” and “Coordinated Entry System matchers” that are specifically meant to service the AIAN community, and are not limited by Service Planning Areas
- e. Identify proper subcommittees or commissions to ensure proper AIAN representation and lift up our unique issues

2. Align our local Native American community based organizations to create a transparent and cohesive system of care for our homeless relatives. Process steps:

- a. Analyze data from focus group and 1:1 interviews to help guide future efforts
- b. Convene a regular working group to facilitate more community conversation, and elicit specific needs
- c. Develop a community-oriented housing resource guide
  - i. Work closely with the LACDMH Underserved Cultural Competency Committee (AIAN group) as they develop a centralized community website
- d. Continue to educate the community at large with continued forums, outside speakers, etc.
- e. Identify gaps in knowledge and data to drive a continued research agenda

3. Develop relationships with other urban AIAN communities to explore best practices in housing our AIAN community

- a. The first such meeting occurred on December 3rd, 2018 where Colleen Echohawk, Director of the Chief Seattle Club and Founder of the Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness spoke about best practices and efforts in her city.
- b. A team of 5 individuals representing County agencies, and Native non-profits recently applied for a HUD technical assistance program to house Native/tribal communities and gain exposure to current efforts in Indian Country

4. Partner with local non-Native non-profits and government agencies to enhance our current services for our community

- a. Explore existing local best practices and identify areas for synergy

5. Develop relationships, explore best practices, lessons learned, and areas of potential synergy with other special populations including: victims of domestic violence, the aging community, the LAHSA Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness.

6. Continue to work toward a shared vision of building Native specific housing in Los Angeles County

- a. Develop an ongoing community workgroup to help develop next steps



WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Analysis of data from follow-up focus group with AIAN service providers, and interviews with community members experiencing homelessness
- Continue to invite or visit other urban Native community organizations who are providing housing for their communities
- We will commence an ongoing Task Force in March 2019 on Native American homelessness
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, along with partner agencies such as the Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority, UAIH, and AICC sent a letter of interest for the “Addressing Homelessness in Tribal Areas: Homeless Housing and Services Technical Assistance for Organizations Serving American Indians and Alaska Natives (on and off Tribal lands).” We anticipate a response in the coming weeks indicating whether we were chosen

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- Share your stories and concerns at various city/county commission meetings on homelessness. Follow our website ([www.lanaic.org/homelessness](http://www.lanaic.org/homelessness)) and social media sites for updates on this issue, and other projects of the Commission
- Apply to be part of our ongoing Task Force beginning March 2019.
- Tell us your stories: Whether in a letter, a video message, a piece of art, or beyond, we want to know how homelessness is affecting our community. Please contact the Commission to share your thoughts at [homelessness@lanaic.org](mailto:homelessness@lanaic.org).
- Come to our Commission meetings which take place on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 376, at 7:00pm



## GLOSSARY

**American Indian and Alaska Native vs. Native American vs. Native:** These terms are often used interchangeably. All of these terms denote that AIAN are more than just a racial/ethnic group, but have a unique political status with the United States government. Federally recognized tribes are sovereign nations, and therefore have a nation-to-nation relationship with the federal government. In the political-legal sense, there are more nuances between Federally recognized vs. State recognized vs. those tribes whose status has been ‘terminated.’ In the social sense, AIAN identity can be a spectrum of factors. For data/research purposes, AIAN residing in urban areas are typically defined as those who identify as AIAN alone or in combination with other races, including Hispanic ethnicity.

**Continuum of Care:** The group organized to carry out the responsibilities required under federal regulation governing the administration of federal assistance for homeless assistance and homelessness prevention assistance. CoCs are composed of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless service providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve veterans currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, and persons currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, to the extent these groups are represented within the geographic area and are available to participate.

**Coordinated Entry System:** Facilitates the coordination and management of a crisis response system’s resources that allows users to make data-informed decisions from available information to efficiently and effectively connect people to interventions that will rapidly end their homelessness. CES ensures that the highest need, most vulnerable persons in the community are prioritized and matched to available housing and connected to supportive services and that available resources are used equitably.

**CES Participating Agency:** Any agency providing housing or services to persons who are literally homeless or at imminent risk of literal homelessness, and who have agreed to abide by the LA Countywide CES Policies and Procedures to the greatest extent practicable. At a minimum, CES Participating Agencies shall endorse the CES Guiding Principles and agree to support the systems approach defined by CES-defined access points, standardized assessment process, prioritization protocols, and referral strategies.

**CES Triage Tools:** An assessment tool, specific to each of the three subpopulations –adults, families with children, and unaccompanied youth -- used to help define risk and a person’s or family’s barriers, goals, and needs as a part of the initial assessment element of the assessment process. Currently, the Next Step Tool is used for youth, the VI-FSPDAT is used for families with children, and the VI-SPDAT or CES Survey Packet is used for adults.

**Emergency shelter:** Any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless.

**Federal Recognition:** There are 573 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages. Federally recognized tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the United States, have certain inherent rights

of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty), and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States.

**Homeless:**

**Category 1, Literally Homeless:** Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

**Category 2, Imminent Risk of Homelessness:** Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; and (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

**Category 3, Homeless Under Federal Statutes:** Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with Category 3 children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; and (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.

**Category 4, Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence:** Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** HMIS is a computerized data collection system designed to capture client information over time on the characteristics, service needs and accomplishments of homeless persons

**Housing First:** An approach to homeless assistance centered on connecting persons experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry. Housing First programs do not require persons experiencing homelessness to prove “housing readiness,” demonstrate sobriety, engage in treatment, have employment, or have income to obtain program entry or for continued assistance.

**Indigenous:** According to the United Nations, “Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.” This is in contrast to AIAN, who are Indigenous people, but have a distinct political

## GLOSSARY

relationship with the United States, and whose tribes have political sovereignty.

**Interim Housing:** Interim Housing is an intervention that provides people experiencing homelessness with temporary housing intended to resolve their immediate experience of unsheltered homelessness, to connect participants to permanent housing opportunities in their communities, and to provide various other services. Interim Housing, as defined by Los Angeles County, includes Crisis Housing, Winter/Seasonal Shelter, Bridge Housing, Recovery Bridge, Recuperative Care, Stabilization Housing, and Safe Haven programs.

**Permanent Housing:** Community-based housing without a designated length-of-stay in which formerly-homeless persons live as independently as possible. Permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing are two primary types of permanent housing assistance provided by the LA County CES.

**Permanent Supportive Housing:** Permanent housing with long-term leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist families with children, individuals, and youth experiencing homelessness with high level of service needs. The goal of PSH is to assist participants with a long-term rental subsidy and/or supportive services.

**Rapid Re-Housing:** A program type that connects families with children, individuals, and youth experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. Rapid re-housing programs help persons experiencing homelessness to solve the practical and immediate challenges to obtaining permanent housing while reducing the amount of time they experience homelessness, avoiding a near-term return to homelessness, and linking to community resources that enable them to achieve housing stability in the long term.

**Referral Partner:** An entity or agency that can direct a person experiencing a housing crisis to a CES access point. Referral partners maintain a working knowledge of CES access points and refer people experiencing homelessness to resources to address their housing crisis.

**Safe Haven:** Safe havens are supportive housing that shall not require participation in services and referrals as a condition of occupancy. Instead, it is hoped that after a period of stabilization in a safe haven, residents will be more willing to participate in services or referrals and will eventually be ready to move to more traditional forms of housing.

**Transitional housing:** Transitional Housing is conceptualized as an intermediate intervention between emergency shelter/crisis housing and permanent housing. It is intended to be more long-term, service-intensive and private than emergency shelters, yet remains time-limited to stays of three months to three years. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma Informed Care also emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both participant and providers, and helps

participants rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Trauma Informed services take into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and place priority on the trauma survivor’s safety, choice, and control. Trauma Informed Services create a culture of nonviolence, learning, and collaboration. Contractors must also develop sets of policies and procedures for educating and Handout B: Interim Housing Practice Standards 13 training staff on Trauma Informed Care practices and how trauma may adversely affect aspects of a person’s development.

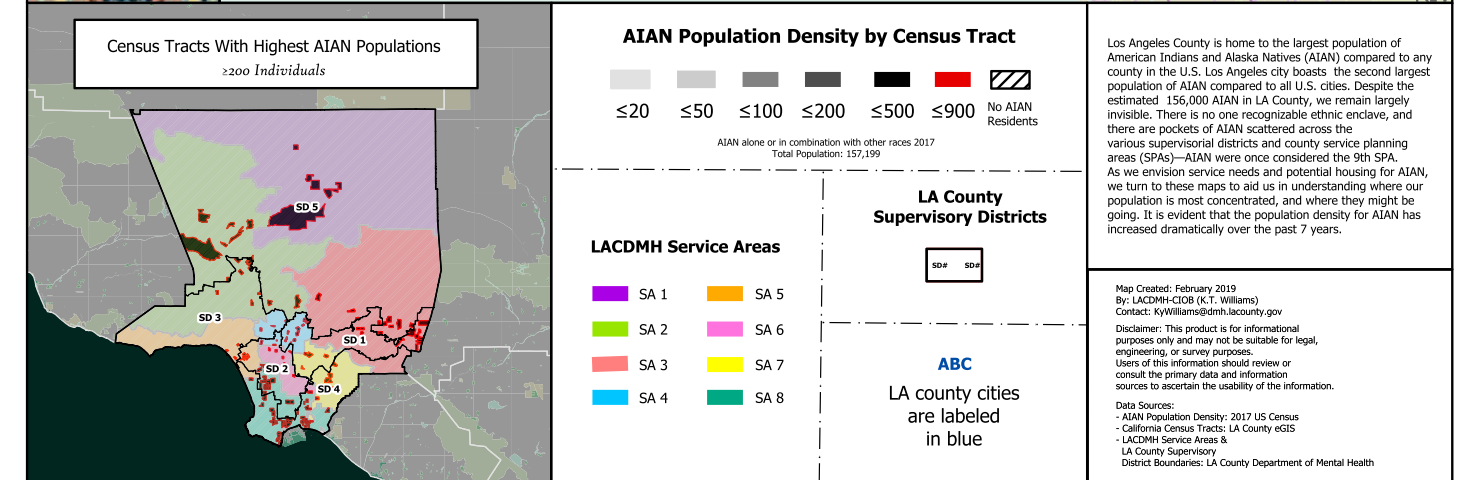
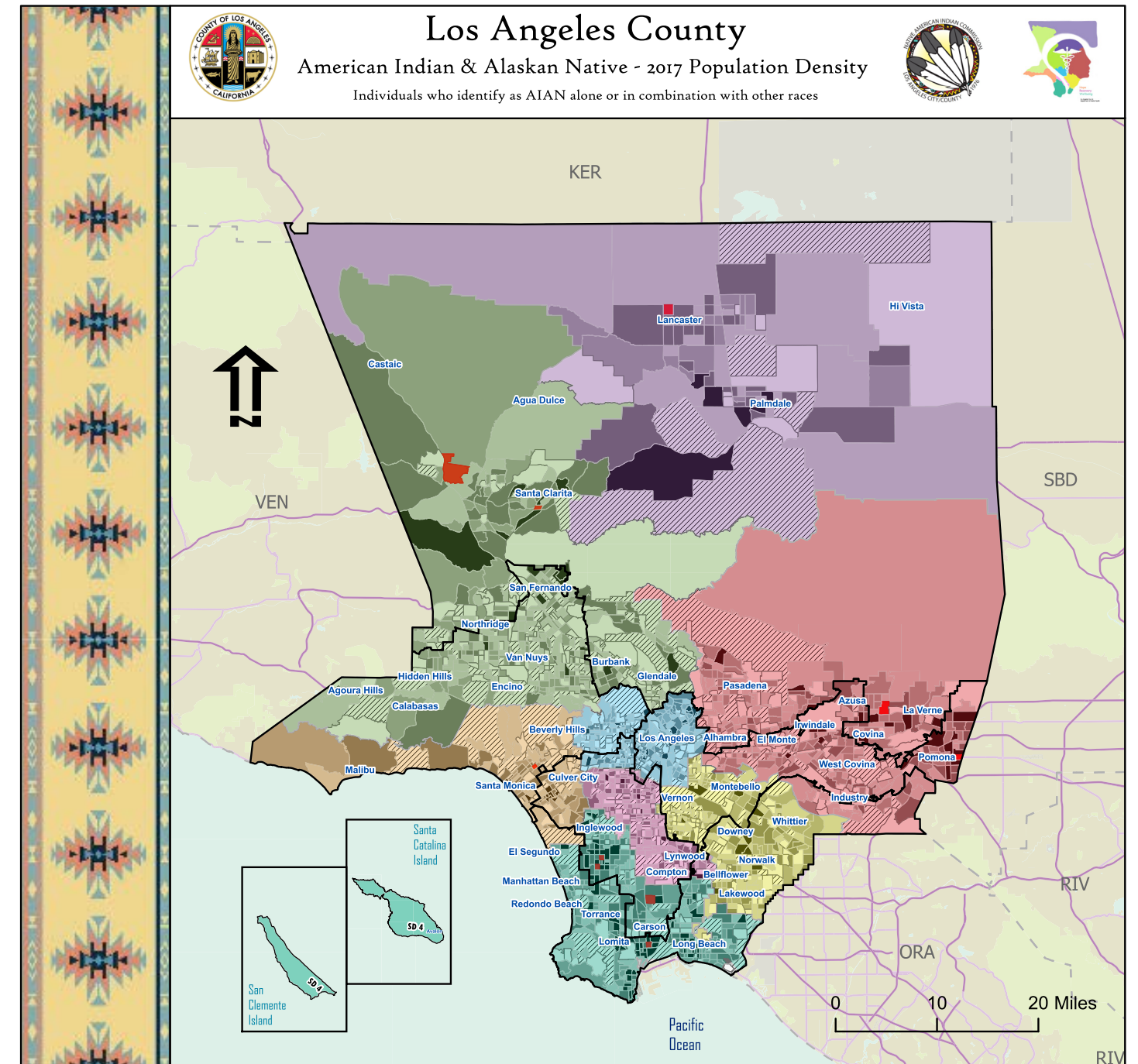
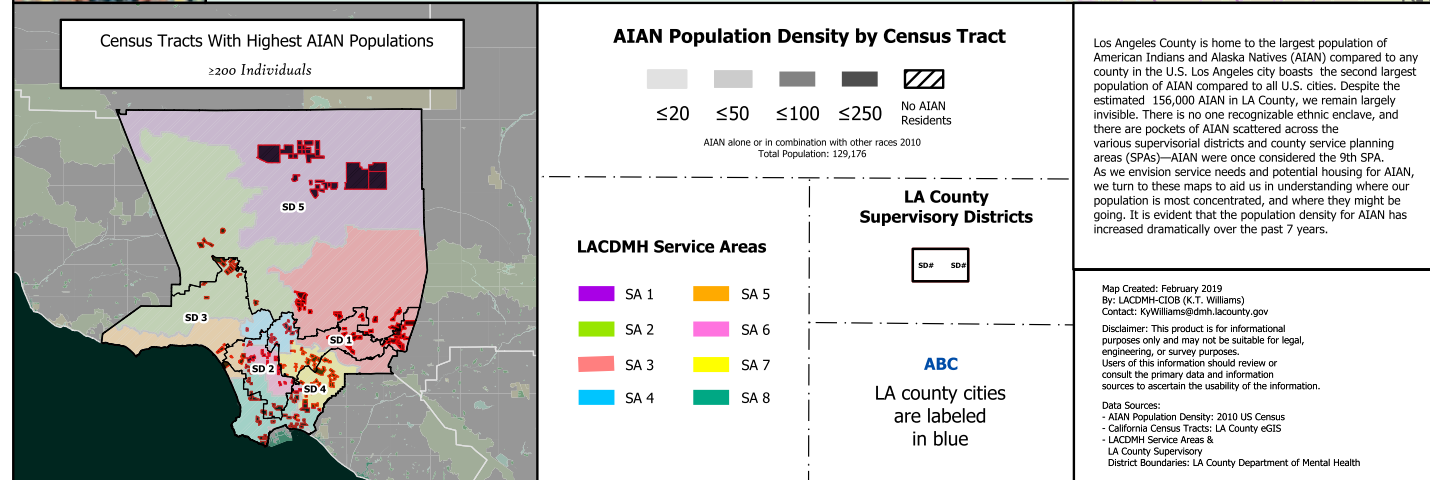
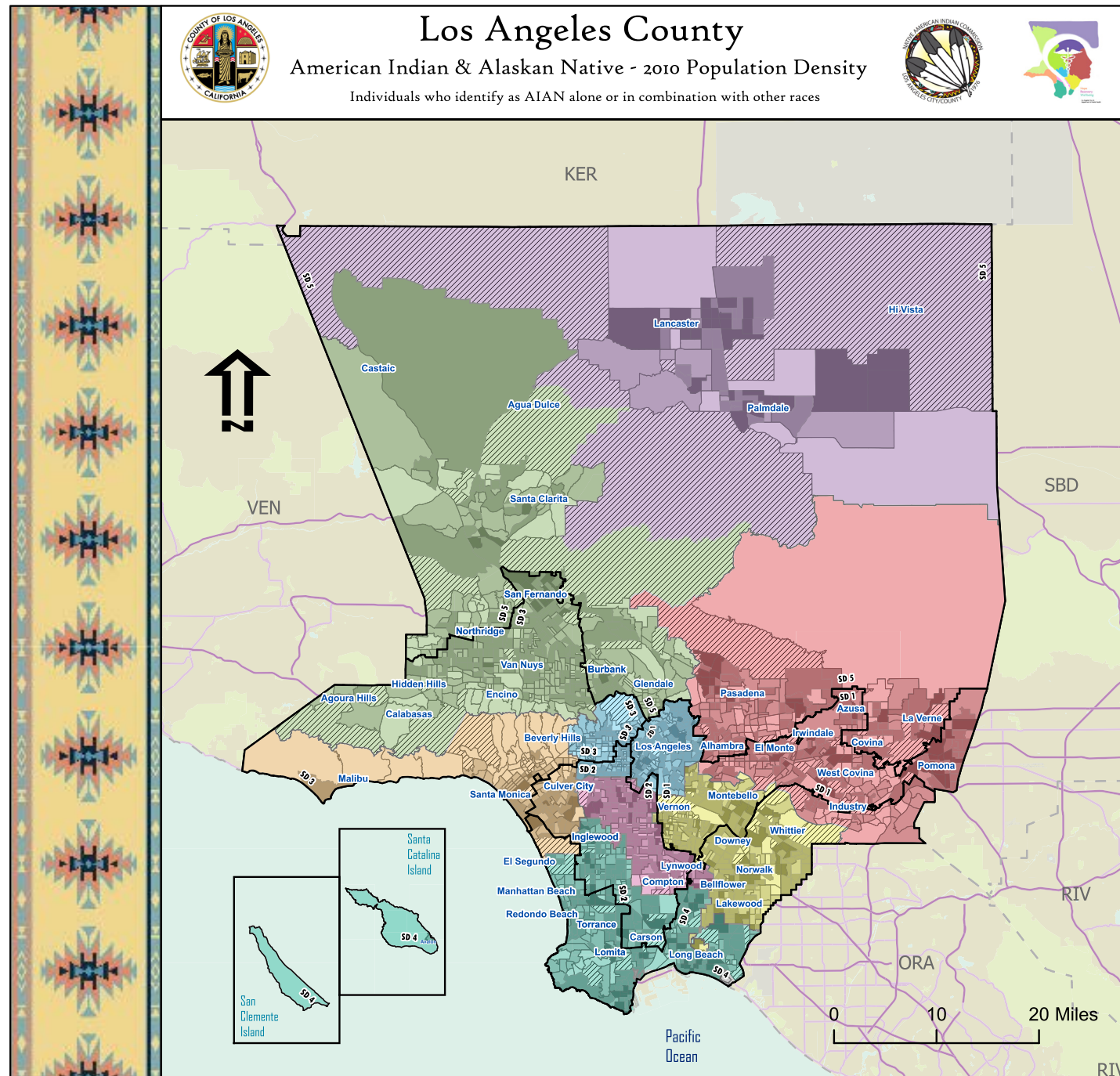
**VISPDAT** (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool): a survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization when providing assistance to homeless and at-risk of homelessness persons.

**Youth Transitional Housing:** A program type that provides safe and supportive 24-hour residence for a period of up to 36 months for transition age youth (between the ages of 18 to 24) experiencing homelessness. Housing may be provided in site-based transitional living facilities or in scattered-site apartments in the community. Transitional Housing provides an individually-tailored package of supportive services that include, but are not limited to, life skills development, workforce readiness, mental and behavioral health, and educational and vocational services that support the young person in obtaining permanent housing and achieving housing stability in the long term.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission, and not necessarily that of our community partners including the American Indian Counseling Center, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, or the United American Indian Involvement.